

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 02208 051222Z

46

ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AGR-20 EB-12 COME-00 TRSE-00 AID-05

IGA-02 L-03 H-03 SWF-02 STR-08 INRE-00 CIAE-00 INR-11

NSAE-00 RSC-01 OMB-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00 SS-20 NSC-07

IO-14 SP-03 PRS-01 USIE-00 PA-04 DRC-01 /135 W

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O R 051120Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1631

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE DAMASCUS 2208

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, SY

SUBJECT: SYRIA - PL-480

REF: A. STATE 218418; B. DAMASCUS 2145; C. DAMASCUS 2126

1. IN RESPONSE REF A, SARG DEPUTY MINAGRICULTURE IBRIK INFORMED ECONOFF OCT 5 THAT MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE HAD OFFICIALLY REVISED WHEAT PRODUCTION ESTIMATE FROM EARLY MARCH PRELIMINARY SURVEY RESULT OF ABOUT TWO MILLION M.T. TO 1.5 TO 1.6 MILLION M.T. FROM GRAIN SAMPLE SURVEYS IN EARLY JUNE, AND TO 1,050,000 M.T. AFTER COMPLETION OF HARVESTING IN LATE JULY. PRELIMINARY SURVEY RESULTS BASED ON GOOD RAINFALL EARLY IN YEAR, BUT BY TIME OF JUNE SURVEY, HOT WINDS HAD REDUCED PRODUCTION ESTIMATES IN RAINFED AREAS, WHICH IBRIK NOTES IS 90 PER CENT OF AREA PLANTED IN WHEAT FROM WHICH COMES 82 PER CENT OF ANNUAL WHEAT PRODUCTION. WHILE RAINFALL EARLY IN YEAR WAS GOOD, NEGATIVE EFFECT OF HOT WINDS AND INADEQUATE DISTRIBUTION OF RAIN IN CERTAIN AREAS PRODUCED SMALLER THAN EXPECTED CROP.

2. SYRIAN BUSINESSMAN HAS INFORMED SEVERAL US GRAIN

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PAGE 02 DAMASC 02208 051222Z

TRADERS AND EMBASSY OF UPCOMING CEREALS OFFICE TENDER IN

OCTOBER FOR IMPORTATION OF 200,000 M.T. OF SOFT AND DURUM WHEAT AND 25 TO 30,000 M.T. OF WHEAT FLOUR. IBRIK SAID HE AWARE OF THESE POSSIBLE TENDERS, ADDING THAT, WHILE NOT YET OFFICIAL, THEY CERTAINLY WERE IN EXPECTED RANGES. IBRIK STATED EMPHATICALLY THAT SYRIA WOULD NOT BE IN A POSITION TO EXPORT WHEAT THIS YEAR (OTHER THAN WHEAT LOAN/EXCHANGE OF 10,000 M.T. FOR JORDAN, TO BE REPAID IN THREE MONTHS) AND DEFINITELY WOULD HAVE TO IMPORT WHEAT GRAIN AND FLOUR (AND, OF COURSE, RICE, FOR WHICH SYRIA IS TRADITIONALLY IN NET DEFICIT POSITION, AND THEREFORE MUST IMPORT).

3. WHEAT PRODUCTION REVISION FROM 1.6 MILLION M.T. (REF C) TO 1.05 MILLION M.T. (REF B) WAS DUE TO ERROR BY MINAGRICULTURE STAFF IN TRANSLATING HANDWRITTEN ARABIC TO ENGLISH. THUS, IT IS A REVISION BASED ON CLERICAL ERROR AND NOT MINAG OFFICIAL PRODUCTION REVISION WHICH HAS BEEN AT 1.05 MILLION M.T. FOR SOME TIME.

4. OTHER CORRECTIONS OBTAINED DURING OCTOBER 5 MEETING ARE:

A. RICE TOTAL SUPPLY (REF C), ADDITION ERRORS FOR 1971, 68,400 VICE 72,000 M.T.; FOR 1972, 74,520 M.T. VICE 68,520 M.T.

B. WHEAT PRODUCTION (REF C), FOR 1971 SHOULD BE 662,000 M.T. VICE 846,000. IBRIK EXPLAINED THAT FOR ALL YEARS SHOWN ON TABLE OTHER THAN 1971, OFFICIAL PRODUCTION FIGURES ARE BASED ON MINAG ESTIMATES AND THE OFFICIAL FIGURES IN SARG STATISTICAL ABSTRACT AND MINAGRICULTURE ESTIMATE ARE THE SAME. IN 1971, HOWEVER, CENTRAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS PERFORMED ITS DECENNIAL AGRICULTURAL CENSUS AND PRODUCED 662,000 M.T. FIGURE WHICH IBRIK SAID SHOULD BE USED IN PLACE OF MINAG ESTIMATE OF 846,000 M.T.
MURPHY

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